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Subject: Ideal Standards of Duty.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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IDEAL STANDARDS OF DUTY.

"Let God be true, but every man a liar."—ROM., III., 4.

The context is, "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid; yea, let God be true, but every man a liar."

It sounds harshly; but there is nothing further from harshness than the spirit of this passage. Does it seem to ignore man's moral right? Is it the shadow of such a doctrine of sovereignty as would sacrifice the whole human race for the sake of building up a solitary God of ineffable glory? There have been ways of attempting to exalt God which substantially amounted to this: that he was an all-engulfing selfishness, and that he was to be made resplendent, no matter what became of everything else. Is this such a doctrine? Far from it. There is no such thing in it.

A man has rights before God as well as before his fellow men; and nowhere are they meddled with, except to augment and fortify them so much as in the tribunal of God's own heart.

The apostle had been showing the self-sufficient and spiritually conceited Jews that they had utterly failed of becoming truly religious by means of the old law. He was preparing the way to present Jesus Christ to them as the fulfillment of their law, and he was convicting them of all manner of disobediences under that law. And the question arises, as we shall see, very naturally, "What! was the law, then, good for nothing?" The law was good; but it was weak. It was not strong enough. It had not motive and authority enough. It meant the right thing, but man was too weak. Therefore, the law did not work out that which its interior spiritual tendency would have wrought out if it had been unchecked. But, if the law was weak, then God attempted to do what he was unable to do. If the law was dishonored in the conduct of the Jews, how should the Lawgiver retain honor? Was the law to blame, then? No; the law was good. "But," say

men, "it failed; the Jews fell short of righteousness; and God is to blame." "No." says the apostle, "let God be true, but every man a liar. God is not implicated."

The tendency of the Jewish objector was to defend the national character, and to justify his compatriots, by bringing down the character and government of God; and the apostle answered, "Let the justice and goodness of God remain untarnished, however it may affect men's reputation. It is not right that God should be clouded by the passions which arise from human conduct under the divine government. It is needful to man that the ideal of the universe, which God is, should remain untarnished." And the doctrine which we deduce from this passage is, *first*, the tendency of the human heart to seek to diminish the intensity of self-condemnation under a consciousness of ill-desert, by lowering the standard of duty; and *second*, the importance of maintaining our ideal of rectitude and of duty in spite of all imperfections on the part of men under such law or ideal.

All sense of self-condemnation arises from a comparison of one's deeds, character, life and motives, with certain definite standards of duty. If there had been no law, there could have been no sense of violating law, and no sense, therefore, of sin.

There is one thing which we bear less willingly than any other—namely, a sharp sense of shame in self-condemnation; and that, in proportion as the make-up of the character or the nature of a man is strong. If a man be weak, and he naturally tends to collapse, it does not make much difference to him whether it be one thing or another; but if the pillars of a man's soul are set up strongly; if his reason is luminous; if his self-respect is positive; if his ideal of true character and manliness is eminent, then there is nothing that he bears less willingly than to be brought into judgment before himself. The mischief of being brought to shame before men, is, that the very shame which our exposure before men excites, rebounds in us, and produces there self-degradation and self-abhorrence. There is no other feeling that is more mephitic, and none that seems to suffocate a man more, than to feel in his own sight condemned, and to be worried by his own accusing and condemning conscience. And in certain natures, and during certain periods of men's lives, almost without regard to their nature, it amounts actually to torment.

While, then, this feeling is so acute and so unbearable, it is scarcely surprising that men attempt to get rid of it. They pad their conduct, as it were, that the yoke may not bear so heavily where they feel sore. They attempt in one way or another, to get rid of this self-condemning feeling. They want to stand better with themselves than with anybody else. Therefore, men tell themselves more lies, and make believe more,

in this direction, than in any other. They flatter themselves. They deliberately fool themselves. They go about to do it—and for the same reason that men take opiates. “It is not good,” says your physician, “that you should take opiates to remove that sharp pain. You had better take a longer course of medicament and remove the cause, and so get rid of the pain.” “But,” you say, “I must pursue my business; and, though it may not be the best thing, give me the opiate.” Men will not, if they can help it, bear the sting, the rasp, or the ache, of self-condemnation; and by every means in their power they are perpetually trying to get rid of it.

The ordinary method is to impair that rule of conduct, or that ideal of life, which condemns them. They attack that which attacks them. They say, “That law which makes my conduct hateful shall not stand with such sovereignty. I will pull it down. I will hate it. I will dismantle it. It shall not stand with such imperious authority to overlook me, and then smite me with these pangs of self-reproach.” Men plead the force of circumstances for breaking the laws which are most painful to them. They attempt to show that they are not to blame. They plead that breaking the law is not very sinful. That is, to save themselves, they destroy the dignity and the importance of the law. The law that, being broken, harms no one, has no reason for existing at all. And so if men say, “This is not a great sin: the law says it is; but the saying so does not make it so,” it is a deceitful and underhanded way of attacking the law itself.

Now, according to the spirit of our text, let the law remain if every man is crushed. Let God be true; let him stand really God, speaking truth and acting justice, though the unclouded ideal of his glory and example should bring self-condemnation to every human soul.

Men at length directly assail the law. They lower its dignity. They deny its authority. They even make it a patron of their sins. Sometimes they actually represent it as being *particeps criminis* with them. Let us trace this tendency.

A child that will not obey his parents' injunctions begins, after a while, to find fault with the rigor by which he is held in check; and as he gets older he finds fault with the unreasonableness of family government; and he finds developed more and more in himself a strong tendency to resist and throw off parental authority. “To be sure,” he says, “I *have* gone forth at untimely hours; to be sure, I *have* indulged in pleasures more than I ought; to be sure, I *have* had my own way in contravention of express authority; but then, I am not so much to blame. Who *could* live in a family screwed up as tensely as this is? A man must have *some* room. There is no chance to breathe at home. Everything is narrow and hateful here. I must

have liberty to *live*." In other words, what is all this but an attempt on the part of the child to excuse its own defects and disobedience, by inveighing against the nature of the law under which the obedience takes place? This tendency begins early; and a person is just as proficient in attempting to cover over his own wrong-doing by degrading authority, in childhood, as he will be when forty years have taught him the profession.

When the young go forth from under the parental roof to the training ground of life, they manifest the same tendency. The truant and dullard at school, not fulfilling his tasks, turns against the master, and at last against the school. He declares that *it is not his fault*. Or, if he admits that it is his fault in part, he pleads the *provocation*—the *provocation*! And so the rebellious boy at school tarnishes the good reputation of the teacher, and inveighs against the school. "I would rather be in the Black-hole of Calcutta!" he says—and all because he will not study, and because he will frolic in ways that destroy the government and regimen of the school.

If a young man is learning a profession, and he prefers to sport rather than to work, and is indolent, and unsteady, when the pressure of blame and condemnation begins to come on him, he turns instantly to find reasons, not in himself, but in the master, in the shop, in the business; and he finds fault with every thing except that corrupt and fractious disposition which he carries in his own soul. He blames everybody and everything but his own self.

When under the head and heat of youthful passions men defy the moral public sentiment which expresses the social conscience of the community, and come under its ban, and begin to smart, the more generous natures are sometimes recovered; but you will find that ordinarily the infliction of the unerring penalty of public sentiment on selfish and proud natures, leads them to attack public sentiment. If it be a course of impurity that they have pursued, they charge public sentiment with prudery: If they have been going in ways in which they have left truth far behind, they charge public sentiment with fanaticism. If they have been indulging their passions, they charge public sentiment with being under the control of puritanism. Men will eat to gluttony, and drink to intemperance, and wallow in bestial lusts, and indulge in all manner of pleasures, being profuse in everything but rectitude, and then, when the worthlessness and mischievousness of their career is brought home to them, they will turn and inveigh against that law, and that ideal of rectitude, and that very notion of manhood, to which they are held, and by which they are measured. And, more than that, they do not believe there is anything in the community better than they are.

That which is true in respect to the social defections of men, becomes also a marked feature in criminal life. As men begin to violate the laws of the community in the spirit, or in the letter, or both; as they begin to suffer, either under the loss of reputation or under the suspicion of having lost it; as they begin to feel the stings of penalty, they seek to excuse themselves from blame, and to fix it upon others. Even when the law cannot get its hand upon them; or when, getting it on them, it cannot hold them (for in some cases men are like eels, and the law is a fisherman that can catch them but cannot hold them; and in other cases men are like electric eels that paralyze the one that touches them); and when they begin to feel that other law, the unwritten law, which no man can escape; when they begin to feel the judgment of good men's thoughts; when they begin to feel the wintry blast of good men's indignation round about them, and they are called "sharpers," and are treated as such, and they are said to be "too keen for honest men," and they begin to feel the cold glance and the imperious bearing of the consciously good man that looks down upon them—then they resent it. They complain that it is an indignity heaped upon them; that it is a wrong done to them. And if you press their misconduct home upon them, they say, "Society is wrongly organized. Society is the mother of crime in modern times. If society were better organized, business would be conducted differently, and men would act differently. But how can you expect that a man will be right when everything is organized on wrong principles?" And so men, in order to justify their personal dishonesties, their own criminal acts, destroy the reputation of society, and the equity of business, or seek to do it.

In special avocations men are perpetually justifying themselves for wrong conduct. In the ministry, in the law, in the medical profession, in mechanical pursuits, in commercial operations, men justify themselves by pleading that such and such callings cannot be successfully followed without moral obliquity. And what is this but tarnishing these employments, destroying their reputation, for the sake of shielding one's own.

Law becomes an oppressor in the eye of the transgressor; and instead of laying their hand on their mouth, and their mouth in the dust, and crying, "Guilty! guilty!" they stand and arraign the law. They plead "circumstances." They declare that they are not so bad as they are thought to be. They complain that they are measured wrongly. And so they would have God a liar, as it were, that they might be justified. But "let God be true, and every man a liar." Let not your ideal of justice, your ideal of excellence, your ideal of essential beneficence, and the wisdom of all the great forms in which society has developed itself in the spheres of business, go down for the sake of

covering up your sin-stung conscience. Humble yourself, and reform, but do not attempt to shield yourself by destroying the very foundations on which life and integrity stand.

This general disposition has a sphere of activity in regard to virtue, probity, sincerity and temperance. It is bad enough for one to be unvirtuous, dishonest, insincere, and intemperate; but the mischief is not half done when these vices, these social misdemeanors, are developed in men. There is something worse than such evils. When a man is intemperate he sins against his own body and soul, in the mere act of inordinate stimulation, which disorganizes both the physical, the intellectual, and the moral parts of the being; but he may still know that there is such a thing as self-government, and respect it, and still believe that there is such a thing as temperance, and revere it. But what if he has given himself over to be a bond-slave to his appetites? and what if, besides that, he justifies himself, and says, "I am no more intemperate than anybody else. I am frank and open. I drink, and show it. Other men drink more than I do, and do not show it. Just go behind the door and see what these temperance men do. They are all a pack of drunkards, only they are hypocrites. I am the only honest man among them?" What is this? Why, it is the plea of a man who, not satisfied with being a drunkard, is destroying the very ideal of temperance. He does not believe that there is anybody better than he is, if you could only turn the secrets of his heart outside. But here is a double destruction—the destruction of his own life, and the destruction of all faith in the ideal of temperance.

Here is a man who has utterly gone away from virtue and chastity. It is bad enough, one would think, for him, from day to day, to cast himself away thus; but that is not all. He says, "I do seek my pleasure as I list; but then do not other people? Talk about my being unjust? Who is just? Impure, am I? Well, I think I have company enough in this world. I do not believe there is anybody that is pure. It is because they cannot, and not because they will not, that they do not run into excesses. Circumstances may hinder them for a little while; but there is nobody who is not temptable." Such men stand inveighing against the memory of their very mother, and whelming the reputation of pure and noble sisters, speaking sad words—mingling with degradation the very name of womanhood. A man who has lost respect for womanhood in actual life may be considered as given over. He is an abandoned wretch. And yet, it is not enough for some men that they follow their violent passions, and seek their own illicit and unchaste and impure pleasures; but they seek to hide the degradation, and cover up the guilt, and cure the smart of their condemning conscience, by pulling down the reputation of woman, and

destroying faith in virtue itself. "All men," they say, "secretly are bad, and all women too. They are alike." They contend that everybody is as bad as they are. And here is a case in which one should say, "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

Oh! save something that is true and pure. Look up at something that is higher than yourself. Pull not down the stars, and tread them under your feet. I abhor—I abhor with a loathing that grows with my years—I despise and detest with all the divinity that is in me, that recreant wretch who seeks to slime the reputation of the true and pure and beautiful, in order to hide his own degradation.

There are those who pursue the same course in regard to probity. They are not themselves truth speakers; neither do they believe that any man does speak the truth. "If you will follow that man sharply," they say, "you will find that he lies sometimes. He is more foxy than I am, and he conceals a great deal. I act right out when I act at all. If I want to lie, I lie, and I own it—after it has accomplished what I sent it for. There are other men who do not seem to lie; but if you could only search them you would find that they are as much given to lying as I am." And so men, to justify their conscious defection, impugn the integrity and veracity of all their fellow men. "I am a swindler," says one. "I know that I get a living by dishonest practices. But who does not? Wherein am I different from my fellow men? If you gave them a chance, do not you suppose they would take it? If you hold out a sixpence for a bait, some men will bite at it. But some men will not, simply because they want more. Bait them with a hundred dollars and they will bite. Some men, however, will not take that bait; but a thousand will catch them. There are some men who want more than that; but they will take a hundred thousand. Some men you could not bribe with a hundred thousand; but you could with a million. There is not a man that gold will not fetch, if you offer him enough of it. Therefore, in what respect am I different from other men? I am, to be sure, dishonest. I am a jolly fellow, and I take money where I can get it, and I own it; and other men are just like me, only they do not own it." And what does he do? He destroys his own integrity and honor, and bows down to avarice, and carries all that is divine in him underneath his lust for gain; and then, as if that were not enough, he turns, like the dragon, and sweeps the stars with his tail out of heaven. He destroys the very ideal of honesty by declaring that nobody is honest.

The young man that has lost faith in honor and virtue and integrity is himself lost. There is no redemption for such a man until you can bring him back to faith in moral qualities, and to a belief in their existence in his fellow men, and in their stability under powerful temptations.

The same tendency may also be traced in men's reasonings on the subject of religious truth. I have shown, that it begins in early life; that it runs through industrial forms; that it finds its way into social relations; that it manifests itself in men's arguments on the subject of vice; and that it does not stop short of, but pervades, even the pleas by which criminals seek to defend themselves. And, going on still further, it affects men's theology, or their philosophy of moral life and conduct. Men care very little what theology teaches, provided it does not come home to them, either as a restraint or as a criterion of judgment. Therefore, when the teaching of the pulpit is such, or the state of the community is such, that men do not feel pressed sharply by religious influences, they give themselves no trouble; but when they begin to be made uncomfortable; when the bands begin to draw; when for one or another reason the pulpit is a power, and they find it in the way of their ambition in political matters, or in the way of their gain in worldly matters, or in the way of their peace and comfort in social matters, or in the way of their satisfaction with themselves; when theology begins to stir them up, and sit in judgment on them, then there is a strong tendency developed in them to find fault with the truth, and to justify themselves by adopting a lower view; or, as they are pleased to call it, "a more liberal view." It is under such circumstances that God's sovereignty, his absolute ownership, his right to command, his right to administer truth and justice so that they shall search the inner life, and take hold upon the substance of being, is questioned, and men begin to consider the character of such a God as unlovely, tyrannical, hard, and a government springing from such a nature as a government of rigor. Yea, when the law is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself," they say, "I cannot love the Lord my God, whom I never saw, with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. It is impossible. And when I am commanded to love my neighbor as myself, I am commanded to do that which I cannot do. It is stretching matters unreasonably and unwarrantably."

And so men find fault with the fundamental principles of moral government. The exposition of human character, the analysis of motives, all the morbid anatomy of the human heart, begins to be offensive, and men are not at peace with themselves, and they charge the blame upon other men, upon society, and sometimes even upon the divine government, and God himself. And under such circumstances they go from church to church, to find a more lenient pulpit, where there are more roses, and fewer thorns; where the fruit is not so sour; where the clusters are sweeter; where a more attractive view is given of the divine nature.

Then you shall hear men saying, "I can never be driven by fear. You may perhaps win me by love; but you cannot drive me by fear." And I never knew a man that set himself up in this way, and said that he could not be driven by fear, who could be persuaded by anything. Such a man is just as impervious to honor as to fear. He is just as well armed against the persuasions of conscience as he is against the persuasions of fear. Faith and hope cannot persuade him. Love cannot draw him. Authority cannot daunt him. He is immovable and adamant in the absolute obstinacy of his depravity. Men would rather quarrel with their doctrine, quarrel with their belief, quarrel with their God, than to quarrel with themselves, and be under self-condemnation.

This passage, then, which at first seems to be a harsh one, when you come to carry it out in all its philosophical relations, reveals a tendency which is universal among men—namely, the tendency of a man's conscience to quarrel with the standard of duty, with the ideal of rectitude, rather than repent of the sins which that standard and that ideal have convicted him of, and outgrow his littleness and wickedness.

Now, the destruction of ideal standards is utterly ruinous to our manhood. What is an *ideal*? The word is often used, and might be used still more often. An *ideal* is a perception of something higher and better than we have reached, either in single actions, or in our life and character. It may relate to single acts. An artist has an ideal picture when he is painting a real picture. Woe be to the man whose painting surprises him by being better than he thought! He must have thought very vulgarly. There is that prophetic gift in every soul of any elevation by which there hangs over every step a vision of something higher, and better, and nobler, and sweeter and purer. Every man who is really and fully organized on a noble pattern, has hovering over him a vision of angels transcendently more beautiful than any embodiment of it. He has conceptions of truth infinitely more grand than any exhibitions of truth which he sees on earth. Beauty flames in the heavens with colors brighter than any that can be reproduced in this world. How do they who attempt to fulfill the offices of friendship find every day that they sit in judgment upon themselves because they have not half way come up to their conception of its patience, of its disinterestedness, of its gentleness, of its faithfulness!

Do I need to ask you what your ideal is, ye that have sought in a thousand ways to reach that very conception? The musician is charmed with the song that in his imagination he seems to hear angels sing; but when he attempts to write it down with his hands he curses the blundering rudeness of material things, by which he cannot incarnate so spiritual a thing as his thought. It is all torn; it is stripped

of its plumage, as it were, and reduced to captivity. The true orator is a man whose unspoken speech is a thousand times better than his utterance. The true artist is not a man who can look upon the thing which he has colored and say, "It transcends what I saw," but a man who says, "Oh! if you could see what I saw when I first tried to make this, you would think this most homely." This *exceclaior* of every soul; this sense of something finer, and nobler, and truer, and better—so long as this lasts a man can scarcely go down to vulgarity. So long as this lasts there is in every man a nascent inspiration which tends to look away from self—which certainly does not incline a man to measure himself by his fellow men. It is vulgar for a man to be satisfied with himself because he is better than his fellow men. Every man should have something outside of himself, and outside of his fellow men, by which to measure himself. Every single day should be a day to you of royal discontent. You never thought as well as you ought to think. You never meant as highly as you ought to mean. You never planned as nobly as you ought to plan. You never executed as well as you ought to execute. Over the production of the scholar, over the canvas of the artist, over the task of the landscape gardener, over the pruner's knife, there ought to hover, perpetually, his blessed ideal, telling him, "Your work is poor—it should be better;" so that every day he should lift himself higher and higher, with an everlasting pursuit of hope which shall only end in perfection when he reaches the land beyond.

But what if some mephitic gas shall extinguish this candle of God which casts its light down on our path, to guide us, and direct our course upward? What if clouds away round it, and hide it? What if the breath of man, for whom it was sent, shall blow it out, and he be left in darkness through the vast ether, and doomed to puzzle and grope his way, and sink down toward the beast that perishes? Woe be to that man whose ideal in art, and literature, and friendship, and honor, and morality, and religion, in the whole sphere of life, has gone out and left him to the vulgar level of common life, without spring, without upward motive, without aspiration. That is vulgarity indeed. They are not vulgar who wear poor clothes; they are not vulgar who have open windows at their elbows; they are not vulgar who wear gaping shoes; they are not vulgar who delve in the dirt, or labor in the quarry, or toil in the colliery, or stand at the smith's anvil, and are besmudged; they are not vulgar who do common things, and work with the hands. They who walk in silk, and have no aspiration, are vulgar. They that shine like silver and gold, but have no ambition for anything nobler and better, are vulgar. What wine is, which has stood uncorked, and lost all its bubbling gas and sump and life, that

is a man who has lost all that which should make him form and effervesce. A man who has come to be content—what is he worth, more than a cake not turned, burnt on one side, and dough on the other, and good for nothing either way?

And yet, that which our text reveals, and revealing condemns, is universal (more in some circumstances than in others, and more with certain natures than with others)—namely, the attempt of men to find fault with law, or with God, the fountain of law, to find fault with the ideal of rectitude, to put out that ideal which raises them above the crawling worms and hopping beasts of the earth, rather than find fault with themselves. Nay, “Let God be true, but every man a liar.”

Are there none in this congregation who have found themselves limned and described in this discourse? I know many of you feel that there is truth in what I have said to-night. It touches a chord of your own experience. You know that the tendency is to degrade and lower the standard of duty for the sake of relatively elevating yourselves in your own regard. And are there not some here who need special application of this matter to them? Are there not many of you who have departed from the faith of your fathers, not following a true moral impulse, not following a real life, not enlarging your religious experience, but seeking and hungering after a nobler government and a nobler God than has been taught you? Are there not many of you who have found the faith of your childhood inconvenient, because it would not permit you to run in the ways of thrift, and who have sought another faith? Are there not many of you who have found your early faith a self-restraint, and a hindrance to you in your career of pleasure? Are there not many of you who have put away your Bibles because you found that they stood in the way of your degradation? Have you not laid religion aside so as not to be tormented? Have you not forsaken the house of God? Are there not men here to-night who can say, “Till I was of age, the Sabbath was a day of devotion to me; but since I came down to the great city, and learned the ways of life, I have scarcely for ten years been inside of the house of God.” Why have you ceased to be a reader of the Bible? Why have you ceased to pray? Why have you ceased to frequent the ways of God’s people? Is it not, if you search the matter to the bottom, because these things stood in the way of your own self-seeking, and because, with them, you could not be as proud and selfish and grasping as you wanted to be, and could not seek sensuous enjoyment as much as you wanted, and could not give way to self-indulgence and follow illicit and disallowed ways as much as you would? And did not you give up your faith, or bury it, for the time being, just because your guilty, wicked, corrupt heart felt the gird of God’s law, and you

did not mean to be restrained, and you sought, as it were, to dethrone God? You have shut up your Bible, and very likely learned the lore of infidelity, for no other purpose than to keep down the mutterings of your own conscience. You have been unfaithful to your early convictions; you have been recreant to the dictates of your best judgment and conscience; you have disregarded your sense of honor; you have vulgarized yourself, and degraded yourself, and put out the light of your ideal; and you are making your whole life carnal, sensual and devilish.

Now, I call you to judgment with yourself. You know that you are wrong. You know that such a course as this is not simply wrong, but meanly wrong. More than that, you know it is a wrong that can not end in other than destruction and degradation forever.

There are many who have pursued a course which in the beginning seemed right to them, but which has proved to be wrong. The deflection was slight at first, the incipient wrong was deceptive, and they went on step by step, and became involved; and at last are entangled beyond hope of release. How many of you have found your moral sense so perverted that sins are not the same to you that they once were! Not only religion but morality has gone from some of you. You maintain its forms, because that is a necessary condition of living in society at all. It is thus that you pay respect to the conscience of the community. But inwardly many of you have foresworn faith, even in moral qualities in dealing between man and man.

If God should light the candle of research and go into your hearts, what revelations there would be! Every now and then there comes some astounding revelation which startles the community. But there are many other revelations that are not made so public, where they remain silent, as they should in the pastor's knowledge. Young men reveal their career to me. One young man is brought to the brink of trouble, and is seeking relief. Another young man is asking his way back from ways of vice. Another young man is in despair lest he is already beyond the reach of help. And the opening of these doors of confession shows how much there is of falling into temptation. And I cannot but feel solemn when I stand from Sunday to Sunday among so many young adventurers; among so many that have taken their life in their hands and embarked for time and eternity, and whose welfare is as dear to me as if they were mine. I am a father, and I have sent out barks to be navigated—my own children. I knew that the ocean is infinite, eternal, unfathomable. They part from me on this shore, and land on that, where the wave touches the kingdom of God, or the region of everlasting despair. And I know what it is to yearn for my children, though God has greatly blessed me in that they have gone

right. But I feel as a father feels toward his own children, toward many of you. I know there are many here who have no father to pray for them. I remember, every Sabbath day, when I look into your faces, that I stand as it were in the place of father, and mother, and brother and friend to you. You have no counsellor, many of you. They that naturally would advise you are far from you. And I cannot but speak to you. And though I speak to you in severity sometimes, and in warning often, it is the warning of a friend who often bears you before God in prayer.

Are there not many of you who, for the sake of self-indulgence, have gone wrong in things which, if they were brought to light, would be like the day of judgment flaming before your eyes? Are there not many of you who are losing your faith in essential moral manhood, because it is easier for you to disbelieve in right and honor and rectitude than to say to yourselves, "I am a culprit; I am a thief; I am a liar?" Oh! call yourselves anything; sit in judgment on yourselves, rather than let there arise from your heart the clouds and miasmas that shall put out your belief in these higher elements, and in the safety of them. Though you perish, save your faith. Die, at last, believing that there is such a thing as truth; that there is such a thing as rectitude; that there is such a thing as virtue; that there is such a thing as God, such a thing as heaven, and such a thing as blessedness. With your own destruction do not wreck the universe, and wipe out all faith and hope. That would be destruction indeed. And yet, you are steering right toward it. You are borne on a current that has wrecked thousands in this way. Beware! "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

Oh! why not take counsel of your better thoughts? Why not take counsel of your own blessed hours? Even the lion sports with the kid before he destroys it. The cat that has caught the mouse plays with it as if she were its own mother before she devours it. And the most infernal habits paw their victims at times, and give them some space to run in before completing their destruction. I have seen nimble mice that were wiser than their tyrant cat, and that, taking advantage of their little space, shot into some crevice, and away, to the disappointment and chagrin of grimalkin. And are there not some here who have intervals, moments, when temptation plays them, and lets them go free? Shoot! fly! in those lucid moments, from besetting sins. If the cord is once loosed, let it not come on again. For your soul's sake, for heaven's sake, for the sake of glory and honor and immortality, risk everything. Put not your hands in the gyves and shackles.

This is solemn, day of judgment business. We are going fast

through life. There is little left to any of us, and to most of us less than we think. Ye that to-day are triumphant in full health, stand on the verge of the grave. Your fate is only suspended. And I beseech of you, while tender thoughts are upon you, while hope is yet before you, and while the reasonableness of my exhortation approves itself to every one of you, see to it that you do not give up your faith. See to it that you believe in God, in truth, in integrity, and in virtue; that you maintain the law of these things as the rule of your conduct. Condemn yourselves; bow down yourselves in shame if you are transgressors; correct your life; but do not destroy your belief. *"Let God be true, but every man a liar."*

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Thou gracious God, Father of our spirits, we draw near to thee this evening, in the confidence of children. We have often come unworthily; and yet, even then thy benignity has blessed us. Thou dost not measure our gifts by our deserts, or long ago we should have perished. Thou dost take thy measures from thine own generous nature. Thou art generous in overmeasure. Thou wilt have mercy. Thy heart is our hope and our joy. For, when we look upon ourselves, upon our poor and diminished estate, upon our shrunk and miserable nature, what is there in us that should draw thine eye of regard? We are lower than thou art. We are further removed from thee than the worms are from us; for they keep their estate, and come to the fulness of their being, and do not err on the right hand nor on the left. But we, endowed more royally—yea, with the nature of God—have employed its forces and its powers to carry ourselves every whither in imperfection, and have given way to our passions and appetites, and to every vagrant imagination, and wandered into selfishness and pride, and have destroyed ourselves by the very nobility of our powers; by all that was strong and wide-reaching; by all that had in it elevation. We have sought to make ourselves sovereign, and to separate ourselves one from another, and to surpass each other, and to build here our homes, and forgot the immortal and heavenly inheritance, and struck the music of earthly desire. And thou hast seen how we have perverted all the parts of our being, and how far we are from grace and from God. And yet, while we were thus in darkness and disobedience and perversion, and before we wished to leave them—before aspiration came to us—thou didst have compassion. For it was thy sun that melted the snow that lay heavily. It was thy sun that sought the root that was asleep beneath the ground. It was thine eye that was the summer of the world, and thou didst bring forth, in glorious recreation, all sweet and pleasant things. And we love thee because thou didst first love us. It was thy love that taught us to aspire and to love. And now, though we are far from thee, and languid in every holy desire; though we are full of imperfections; though we requite the utmost generosity with abased selfishness, and though thy faithfulness is met by our forgetfulness every day; yet thou art constant, blessed be thy name. Thou art drawing us to some thought of constancy. Our desires come thicker and faster for a noble character. We begin to desire more and more the heavenly inheritance. More and more we are seeking to follow thee, even though we bear the cross to do it. We are beginning to know the nobility of sorrow. We are beginning to taste how sweet is bitter. We are beginning to know that our lost life is the only life saved. We are beginning to find out how humility is exaltation, and how when we are empty we are filled with all the fullness of God.

Grant, we beseech of thee, that these, the fruits of thy faithfulness, may abound more and more. May the life that was in Christ Jesus be breathed upon us; and may we become like him in all gentleness; in all sweetness of life; in all hope and aspiration; in all patience; in all faithfulness to each other; in all true affection. And grant, we beseech of thee, that we may walk as strangers and pilgrims, even in the midst of our best estate. May we feel that heaven is infinitely better than the best earthly things, and that these are but as a harness. May we not seek our good here. May we not seek to have our inheritance now. Give us that treasure laid up in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.

Grant thy blessing to rest upon each one in thy presence, according to his special need. Look into the heart of every one. Know the sorrows and the necessities of each. Grant that every one may feel that the Spirit is by his side. May that divine and sanctifying influence, which is the comfort of our life, be granted unto each, according to the need and according to the providence under which he hath come hither.

Look, we beseech of thee, upon all the laborers in thy cause, and upon all thy Churches, of every name. And may those greater things in which they agree unite them more and more; and may those things about which they differ, and which divide and vex and harass, be taken quite out of the way.

We pray that thy kingdom may come in all forms of law, and of intelligence, and of justice, and of civil administration, and of human liberty, and of universal civilization. and may the world, redeemed from its animal conditions, at last become thy world. A new heaven, and a new earth let there be, in which shall dwell righteousness.

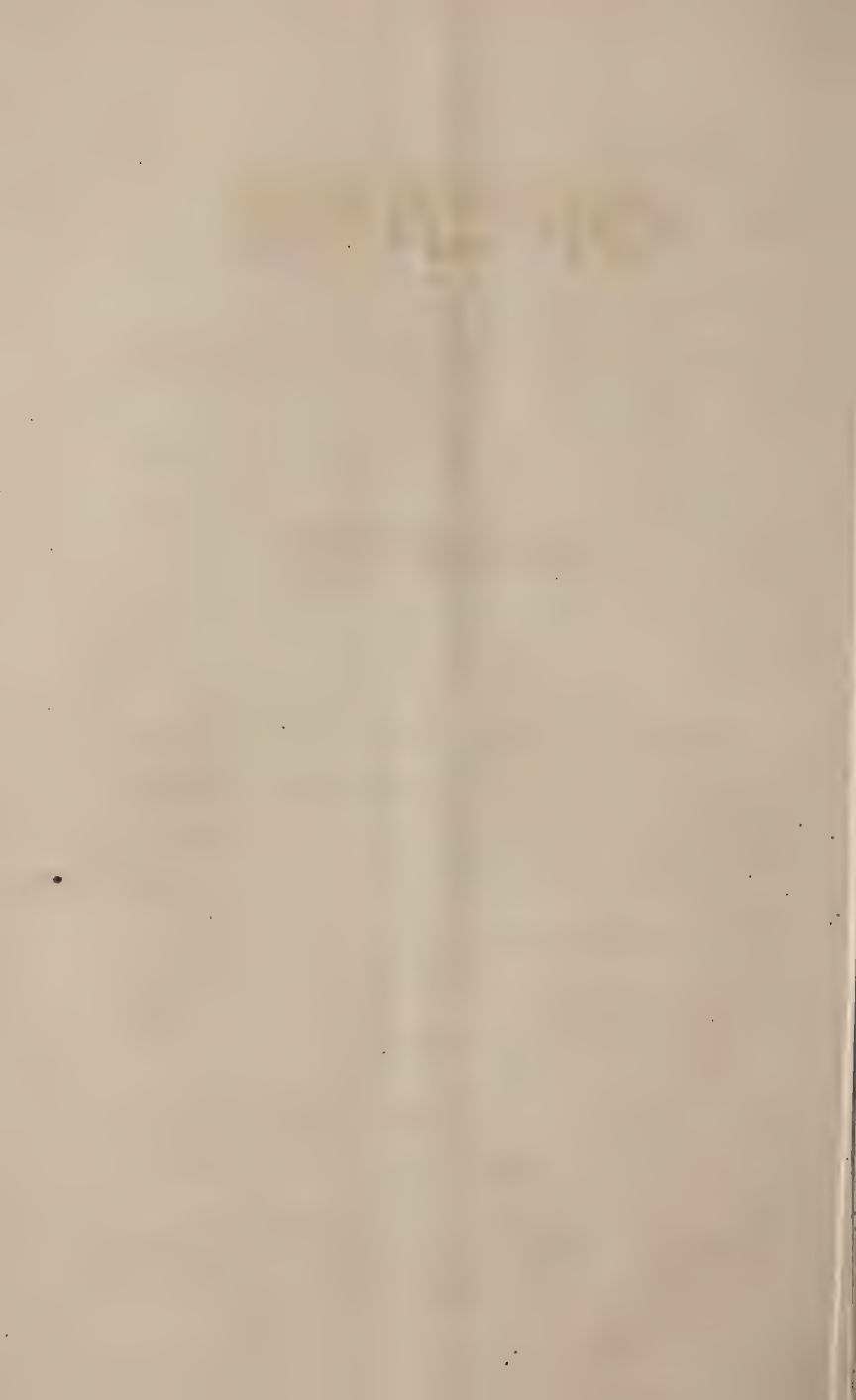
And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt add thy blessing to the word that has been spoken. By thy mighty Spirit draw forth men from their entanglements—from the bewilderments of the wilderness. O thou God and Shepherd, save the imperiled little ones. Bring them back in thine arms. Seek the wandering and the reckless. Bring them back to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

We pray that the word of truth may not be in vain. As rain on good ground, and as seed sown therein, may it be to thine honor and glory.

We ask it through Christ our Redeemer. *Amen.*



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
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THIS Establishment is designed to supply every want connected with the use of Sewing-Machines.

Machines of all the approved makes are kept on hand, or furnished to order. They are sold at the Manufacturer's prices, with all their guarantees. Purchasers have here the advantage of seeing and testing all kinds together, and are thereby enabled to choose the Machine best adapted to their wants. They have also the privilege, if not suited in their first choice, of exchanging for any other kind. Full instructions are given gratuitously.

Machines are also Rented by the Day, Week, or Month, either with or without the privilege of purchasing, which gives an opportunity to test them thoroughly before buying.

We also deal in SECOND-HAND Machines—Buying, Selling, Exchanging, etc. Old Machines are Cleaned, Adjusted, and Modernized, and supplied with all the Tools, Fixtures and Attachments required in their use. Needles, Thread, Oil, Soap, etc., of the best quality, are kept constantly on hand, and sold at the lowest prices.

Operators, with or without Machines, are sent into Families; and Machine Stitching of all kinds is done at the EMPORIUM.

The establishment is complete in its arrangements, and possesses, under the new management, superior facilities for conducting the business. Every effort will be made to please those who favor us with their patronage.

In dealing with this establishment you have
this advantage:

YOU CAN

EXCHANGE

FOR ANY OTHER MAKE

If your first choice should prove
NOT SATISFACTORY.

Machines sent to all parts of the country, and guaranteed to suit.

Full information as to prices, terms, etc., given to all who send address, stating the kind of work they wish to do.